

Natchez Trace State Park Strategic Management Plan

2023 – 2033

DRAFT



T E N N E S S E E
State Parks

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Park Purpose, History and Description | 3 |
| Goals, Objectives and Action Plans | 3 |
| THE RESOURCES: Exemplary Natural and Cultural Stewardship | 3 |
| THE VISITOR: Welcoming and Inviting to All | 4 |
| THE AMENITIES: Well-Maintained Facilities and Amenities..... | 5 |
| THE OPERATIONS: Operational Excellence..... | 6 |
| Park Overview | 7 |
| Site Fact Sheet | 7 |
| Key Attractions | 7 |
| Site and Operations Assessment | 8 |
| Site and Facility Assessment..... | 8 |
| Operational Assessment..... | 11 |
| Summary of Key Recommendations | 16 |
| Resource Management Plan | 17 |
| Resource Management Objectives | 17 |
| Resource Inventory and Assessment | 18 |
| Management Strategies | 19 |
| Land Management Strategies | 21 |
| Supplemental Information | 21 |
| Interpretive Programming and Education Plan..... | 22 |
| Interpretation, Programming and Education Goals | 22 |
| Strategic Programs and Services | 22 |
| Financial Performance Goals..... | 24 |



Park Purpose, History and Description

Natchez Trace State Park lies along the route historically recognized as the Western Spur of the Natchez Trace and comprises close to 10,000 acres of one of the largest state land holdings. The park provides a variety of outdoor recreation and adventure opportunities to visitors. Activities supported by the park and the surrounding state-owned land include fishing, hunting, camping, hiking and wildlife viewing. Additionally, the park preserves stories and artifacts depicting the way of life for the historical inhabitants of the area from Native Americans through the Great Depression.

Franklin D Roosevelt purchased nearly 48,000 acres of heavily eroded and gullied land as part of his New Deal Program in the late 1930's to form what became known as the Natchez Trace Project. The Civilian Conservation Corps went to work at Natchez Trace in 1936, building 250,000 check dams, planting millions of trees, and building access roads throughout the area to rehabilitate the wasteland into a thriving forest. Meanwhile, the Works Progress Administration set out to establish Natchez Trace into one of the largest recreation areas in Tennessee, building 3 lakes, 20 Cabins, Campgrounds, Picnic areas, a group camp, and a Public Recreation Lodge. In 1939, the State of TN began leasing the property from the federal government and in 1955 was given clear title to the Natchez Trace lands. Today, Natchez Trace is co-managed between the Tennessee Division of Forestry, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and Tennessee State Parks as a State Forest, Wildlife Management Area, and State Resort Park.

Goals, Objectives and Action Plans

THE RESOURCES: Exemplary Natural and Cultural Stewardship

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be nationally recognized for exemplary stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

Objective - *More and better stewards:* Increase internal and external stewards who share Tennessee State Parks core values and can contribute to the State Parks mission to steward Tennessee's natural and cultural resources.

Action Plan: As the Natchez Lands group continues to organize and plan, Natchez Trace State Park will work with the TN Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry and the TN Wildlife Resources Agency to jointly manage the resource and visitors as well as attract more visitors to participate in the stewardship and enjoyment of the resource.

Action Plan: Work with our sister departments to increase awareness of proper land management techniques and mitigate negative public sentiment due to land management practices.

Action Plan: Natchez Trace will continue to promote the expansion of the Friends of Natchez Trace, provide regular, scheduled volunteer opportunities and promote the park locally in an effort to get more buy in from our community and visitors.

Action Plan: Continue to build our relationships with local business and government leaders through our participation with the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce, participating with tourism/promotional planning panels and keeping a dialogue going between the park and local government.

Action Step: Work with local schools in Henderson and adjoining counties to expand our programming offers to compliment what students are studying in the classroom.

Objective - Better resource management practices: Identify, manage, and restore unique natural and cultural resources for generations to come.

Action Plan:

Natural Resources

Manage erosion and siltation issues around the park and increase access via sustainable trails. This will include our hiking and equestrian trail systems, recreation areas, Pin Oak Lake, and Cub Creek Lake.

Manage invasive vegetation in natural areas around the park and increase planned native planting areas in an effort to decrease mowing and increase wildlife and pollinator habitats. Specifically, this includes kudzu.

Develop programs to inspire visitors to be stewardship partners.

Cultural Resources

Expand interpretive efforts to tell the full stories of those who lived and worked on the land prior to the formation of the park.

Establish historical markers and interpretive waypoints along the original route of the Western Spur of the Natchez Trace.

Continual collaboration with other related state agencies.

Objective: Better data and technology: Leverage data and technology to help inform and guide decisions on natural and cultural resources stewardship.

Action Plan: Educate and train employees on the use of the tools made available in the areas of visitation, utility data, and GIS. We will use these tools to make more strategic plans and goals.

THE VISITOR: Welcoming and Inviting to All

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be the most accessible, welcoming, and inviting system of parks that enriches Tennesseans and visitors through excellent interpretation, education, and resource-based recreation.

Objective: Accessible, welcoming, and inviting to all: create quality and varied programs of interpretation, recreation, and outreach so that all audiences feel welcome and invited.

Action Plan: Upgrade facilities with the goal of all facilities meeting ADA requirements. Consider and implement Telling Full Stories principles when developing new programs and interpretive displays and ensure that the park and its programs are marketed in a way to reach a broad spectrum of demographic groups. Develop at least one ADA friendly trail and upgrade current trails to accommodate all terrain wheel chairs. Utilize electronic methods such as QR codes for sharing information with park visitors.

Objective: High quality programming: develop and support mission-based and resource-relevant programs to engage visitors, empower staff, and develop community wellbeing.

Action Plan: Continue the development of new programs related to early land users and their way of life. Create additional engaging interpretive programs related to land use, ecology, and best use practices. Work with our partner agencies to develop educational and interpretive programming related to their land management practices.

Objective: *Resource-based outdoor recreation:* provide resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities that ensure representation of Tennessee's natural, scenic, and cultural resources.

Action Plan: Provide interpretive programming around activities that visitors are already participating in such as hiking, boating, shooting sports and outdoor survival skills. Partner with public and private entities to ensure visitors get the best instruction.

THE AMENITIES: Well-Maintained Facilities and Amenities

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be well maintained with facilities and amenities that delight visitors and make Tennesseans proud.

Objective: *Improve maintenance:* Improve overall maintenance and upkeep of all park facilities and amenities that contribute to meaningful visitor experiences.

Action Plan: Continue to improve on preventive maintenance tasks, make skilled training more available to our employees and use a business model to operate the maintenance department.

Action Plan: Plan and prioritize maintenance projects based on the park's management goals.

Objective: *Better park accessibility:* ensure all visitors have opportunities for meaningful experiences in every Tennessee State Park.

Action Plan: Use Telling Full Stories principles in new interpretive displays, ensure all renovations include upgrades to meet current ADA regulations, look for creative ways to make previously inaccessible activities more accessible and inclusive for all potential user groups.

Objective: *Quality and welcoming facilities and amenities:* provide high-quality and well-planned facilities and amenities that enrich the visitor experience.

Action Plan: Improve "curbside appeal" of facilities, improve aesthetics of park and facility entrances, improve methods of reaching visitors with pertinent information such as automatic texts and QR codes, and increase internet accessibility for visitors while they are on the park.

THE OPERATIONS: Operational Excellence

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be a national model for operational excellence in a state park system.

Objective: *Support and empower our people:* support and empower our workforce by creating a caring environment that encourages professional growth and great customer service.

Action Plan: Ensure all supervisors are trained and coached for best practices in regard to leading and supervising employees, encourage employees to complete the appropriate state learning pyramid courses, and equip employees with the tools and knowledge needed to complete the jobs that they are assigned.

Objective: *Efficient and effective operations:* provide efficient, effective, and fiscally responsible service to Tennesseans and our visitors.

Action Plan: Look at methods successfully used in private business and adapt as needed to park run operations, look for ways to provide more services in a more efficient manner, listen to the desires of the visitors and work with local partners to support local government, business, and education.



Park Overview

Site Fact Sheet

| | |
|--|---|
| Park Name | Natchez Trace State Park |
| Site Manager | Chris Hill |
| Area Manager | Ryan Forbes |
| Park acreage | 8,268 |
| Total number of visitors (FY 2022) | 546,402 |
| Total expenses before CO (FY 2022) | \$2,370,456 |
| Total revenues (FY 2022) | \$1,484,795 |
| Retail cost recovery % ¹ | 163% |
| Park cost recovery % | 63% |
| Average expense per visitor (FY 2022) | \$4.34 |
| Average revenue per visitor (FY 2022) | \$2.72 |
| Gross profit or loss | (\$885,661) |
| Total full-time available positions / filled | 26/24 |
| Total part-time available positions / filled | 13/8 |
| Primary feeder markets | Memphis, Jackson, Lexington, Nashville |
| Primary reasons people visit | Lakes, outdoor recreation, access to adjacent state lands, accommodations |
| Opportunities for improvement | Signage, interpretation, trails |

Key Attractions

The amenities or features listed below are those that seem to be most popular for visitors.

- Campgrounds
- Lakes
- Outdoor Recreation (hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, Picnicking, boating, etc)
- Lodging Facilities
- Meeting/Gathering Space
- Fishing
- Hunting

¹ Based on T.C.A. 11-3-305, Cost recovery of revenue-generating facilities

Site and Operations Assessment

This site and operations assessment is a culmination of analyses and findings from a review of the condition of facilities, infrastructure, and operations at Natchez Trace State Park. The findings and observations are not intended to be an exhaustive review of all issues present, but provide a basic understanding of the predominant issues that contribute to the site's current operating conditions. The assessment includes the following:

1. Site and Facilities Assessment
2. Operational Assessment
3. Financial Assessment

Site and Facility Assessment

Methodology

Facility and asset conditions are rated using a differential scale of excellent, good, fair, or poor. Descriptions of conditions that are attributed to each of these findings are also provided.

| Scale of Conditions | |
|---------------------|---|
| Rating | General Description |
| Excellent | Facilities/amenities are in 'excellent' condition when they show little or no maintenance or repair problems. Facilities do not feature any major design or operational issues or flaws that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities are easy to clean and maintain in order to place them back into public use and the users perceive them to be in excellent shape. |
| Good | Facilities/amenities are in 'good' condition when they show only minor maintenance or repair problems. Most maintenance issues with these facilities typically appear to be the result of age and/or heavy use. Facilities may only feature minor design or operational issues that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities are moderately easy to clean and maintain in order to place them back into service and the users perceive them to be adequate for their use, but probably not in excellent shape. |
| Fair | Facilities/amenities are in 'fair' condition when they show significant maintenance or repair problems. Facilities generally exhibit ongoing maintenance issues that appear to be the result of age, heavy use, or design or operational flaws. Some maintenance and repair needs may compound their fair condition by being deferred because of budget and/or resource limitations. Facilities require more effort to clean and maintain before placing them back into service and the users may perceive them as being less than adequate for their use and in a state of deterioration. The facility or structure may need of major repair or replacement. |
| Poor | Facilities/amenities are in 'poor' condition when they show significant, on-going maintenance or repair problems that ultimately may result in suspended use for repair/replacement. Maintenance and repair issues are possibly the result of poor maintenance and clearly the result of age, heavy use, or design or operational flaws. Problems with the facilities are often compounded over time due to consistently-deferred maintenance and repair because of budget and/or resource limitations. Facilities may feature major design or operational issues that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities require excessive effort to clean and maintain before placing them back into service and the users often perceive them as being inadequate for their use and in a state of serious deterioration. The facility or structure may need of major repair or replacement. |



Facility Inventory and Assessment

The table below is an inventory of facilities and amenities at Natchez Trace State Park and provides the assessed condition of each as reviewed in April 2023.

| Site Asset / Amenity | Quantity | Condition |
|----------------------------|----------|--------------|
| Visitor Center/Office | 1 | Excellent * |
| Wrangler Campground | 1 | Poor ** |
| Equestrian Center | 1 | Good |
| Park Store | 1 | Fair |
| Group Lodge | 1 | Fair |
| Cub Lake Cabins | 17 | Fair |
| Campground #2 | 1 | Poor** |
| Campground #1 | 1 | Fair** |
| Cub Lake Lodge | 1 | Poor** |
| Picnic Shelters | 4 | Good |
| Cub Lake Beach/Dock/Bridge | 1 | Fair |
| Ranger Residences | 3 | Good |
| Playgrounds | 6 | Poor to Good |
| Maintenance Compound | 1 | Good |
| Firing Range | 1 | Fair |
| Pin Oak Campground | 1 | Good** |
| Day use restrooms | 3 | Excellent * |
| Camping Cabins | 5 | Good |
| Pin Oak Lodge/Restaurant | 1 | Poor** |
| Pin Oak Cabins | 10 | Fair |
| Archery Range | 1 | Fair |

*Renovations are being completed

**Capital project is in the planning stage

Trail Inventory and Assessment Multiuse (MU)/Hiking (H)

| Trail Name | Mileage | Condition |
|---------------------|---------|-----------|
| Barn Trail (MU) | 1.34 | Poor |
| Beaver Trail (MU) | 1.38 | Poor |
| Blue Trail (MU) | 0.45 | Poor |
| Bucksnot Trail (MU) | 2.94 | Fair |
| Cabin Trail (MU) | 1.06 | Poor |
| Clem Trail (MU) | 0.97 | Poor |
| Cub Lake Trail (H) | 5.73 | Poor |
| Deer Trail(H) | | Closed |

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Fairview Gullies Trail (H) | 0.91 | Fair |
| Fern Trail (H) | 0.38 | Fair |
| Forest Trail (MU) | 1.23 | Poor |
| Herff Trail (MU) | 0.29 | Poor |
| Lovell Trail (MU) | 0.53 | Poor |
| Melton Trail (MU) | 2.47 | Good (Forestry) |
| Molehole Trail (MU) | 0.81 | Poor |
| Oak Ridge Trail (H) | 0.60 | Fair |
| Oak Trail (MU) | 1.14 | Poor |
| Oxford Trail (MU) | 2.89 | Poor |
| Pin Oak Trail (H) | 0.86 | Fair |
| Red Leaves Trail (H) | 26.97 | Fair |
| Shiloh Trail (MU) | 1.02 | Good (Forestry) |
| Side Trail to Melton | 0.27 | Not a trail |
| Stable Trail (MU) | 0.55 | Poor |
| Taylor Trail (MU) | 0.88 | Good (Forestry) |
| Waugh Trail (MU) | 0.61 | Poor |
| Grand Total | 60.35 | |

New Assets Needed

List new assets and amenities that would fall under capital expenditures that are needed to improve visitor experience and operational efficiency.

| New Asset & Amenities | Description |
|-----------------------|--|
| Small Playground | Campground #2 and Visitor Center |
| ADA trail | Need in the proximity of VC and/or Pin Oak |
| Wrangler Camp Stables | Stables within Wrangler Camp for camper use |
| Pavilion | Shelter and restrooms adjacent to new activity field |



Prioritized Facility Needs

Based on the facility inventory and assessment, these prioritized needs have been identified.

| Facility Need | Priority Assignment |
|---|---------------------|
| Cub Lake Cabins – Interior Renovation | High |
| Cub Lake Cabins – Dirt Work | High |
| Cub Lake Swim Beach – Retaining wall, Drainage, canoe launch | High |
| Cub Lake Boat Dock – Renovate | Low |
| Cub Lake Bridge – Repair | High |
| Group Lodge – Interior renovation | Low |
| Park Store – Interior Renovation | Moderate |
| Firing Range – Overhaul | Low |
| Pin Oak Picnic Shelters – repair | High |
| Pin Oak Picnic Shelters – driveways and erosion control | Low |
| Playgrounds – Repair or Replace - CG #1/Wrangler/Cub Cabins/Pin Oak | Moderate |
| Pin Oak Cabins – Interior Renovation | Moderate |

Operational Assessment

The Operational Assessment includes:

1. An inventory and classification of programs and services being provided at the site,
2. A review of staffing at the site,
3. A review of concessionaires and partners operating at the site,
4. Visitation and customer satisfaction, and
5. Professional development and training.

Inventory and Classification of Programs and Services

Programs and services are classified into one of three major categories:

- 1) Core or Essential Services;
- 2) Important Services; and
- 3) Value added or Visitor Supported Services.

Functions of the site are classified into these categories based in part on the mission and public mandates for both the site and the agency. For the programs and services in each of these categories, there are financial performance expectations that will define how services are funded and evaluated.

CATEGORY 1 – CORE SERVICES *[Largely supported by public subsidies]*

Core programs, services and facilities are those the agency must provide and/or are essential in order to capably govern and meet statutory requirements. The failure of the agency to provide Category 1 services at adequate levels could result in significant negative consequences for the public and the resources under protection. The criteria for programs or services to be classified as core or essential are:

- The services are mandated by the agency's law or charter or are contractually obligated by agreement to provide the services.
- The services are essential to protecting and supporting the public's health and safety.
- The services protect and maintain valuable assets and infrastructure.

- The services would generally and reasonably be expected and supported by residents, businesses, customers and partners.
- The services are those that cannot or should not be provided by the private sector.
- The services provide a sound investment of public funds.

The following programs and services offered at Natchez Trace State Park have been identified as **core services**:

- Resource Management
- Safety and Security Services
- Public Land Access
- Camping
- Resource based recreation
- Maintenance

CATEGORY 2 – IMPORTANT SERVICES *[Supported by a balance of revenues and public subsidy]*

Important programs, services and facilities are those the agency should provide, and are important to governing and effectively serving residents, businesses, customers and partners. Providing Category 2 services expands or enhances the agency's ability to provide and sustain its core services. The criteria for programs or services to be classified as important are:

- The services expand, enhance or support identified core services.
- The services are broadly supported and utilized by the community, and are considered an appropriate, important, and valuable public good. Public support may be conditional upon the manner by which the services are paid for or funded.
- The services generate income or revenue that offsets some or all of the operating cost and/or are deemed to provide economic, social or environmental outcomes or results.

The following programs and services offered at Natchez Trace State Park have been identified as **important services**:

- Resource based interpretation
- Outdoor recreation facilities

CATEGORY 3 – VISITOR SUPPORTED SERVICES *[Almost exclusively supported by earned revenue]*

Visitor supported programs, services and facilities are those discretionary services that the agency may provide when additional funding or revenue exists to offset the cost of providing those services. Category 3 services provide added value above and beyond what is required or expected. The criteria for programs or services to be classified as visitor supported are:

- The services expand, enhance or support Core Services, Important Services and the quality of life of the visitors, community or stakeholders.
- The services are supported, valued and well utilized and provide an appropriate and valuable public benefit.
- The services generate income or funding from sponsorships, grants, user fees or other sources that offset some or all of their cost and/or provides a meaningful return on investment.



- The Services can possibly be provided through outsourcing or use of concessionaires, providing opportunities for community enterprise or services that may not otherwise be provided by the agency.

The following programs and services offered at Natchez Trace State Park have been identified as **visitor supported services**:

- Gift Shop
- Boat Rental
- Equestrian Center
- Park Store
- Group Lodge
- Meeting Facilities
- Cabin and Lodge accommodations

Personnel / Staffing Review

Personnel and staffing at Natchez Trace State Park represent the largest area of budgetary expense at an average of 60% of the total operating budget each year for the last three complete years, which is less than the target of labor costs not exceeding 65% of total operating expenditures. The tables below and on the following page provide a basic review of the current staffing at the site.

Full Time Equivalent Employees

| Position / Title | Quantity (FTE) | Compensation Total |
|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Bldg. Maint. Worker 2 | 1 | \$37,800 |
| Park Ranger 2 | 3 | * |
| Park Ranger 3 | 1 | * |
| Admin Assistant 1 | 2 | \$85,848 |
| Conservation Worker 2 | 2 | \$68,136 |
| Conservation Worker 1 | 4 | \$122,016 |
| Conservation Worker 3 | 1 | \$37,800 |
| Bldg. Maint. Worker 3 | 1 | \$42,504 |
| Facilities Supervisor | 1 | \$60,300 |
| Park Manager 3 | 1 | * |
| Custodial Worker 2 | 1 | \$27,504 |
| Hospitality Assistant | 1 | \$34,236 |
| Custodial Worker 1 | 1 | \$26,880 |
| TSP Room Operations | 2 | \$75,984 |
| TDEC General Manager | 1 | \$69,876 |
| TSP Front Desk Associate | 1 | \$30,504 |
| Food Service Asst Mgr 2 | 1 | \$47,976 |
| TSP Chief of Maintenance | 1 | \$53,940 |
| Total | 26 | \$1,117,032 |

**Law enforcement compensation confidential by TN law.*

Part Time Employees

| Position / Title | Quantity | Compensation Total |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Conservation Worker 1 | 2 | \$60,996 |
| Laborer | 4 | \$0 |
| Laborer | 1 | \$27,495 |
| Custodial Worker 1 | 2 | \$50,505 |
| Servitor | 1 | \$16,575 |
| Room Clerk | 2 | \$60,996 |
| Cook 2 | 1 | \$23,693 |
| Total | 13 | \$240,260 |

Labor Support

| Labor Support | Annual Hours |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Volunteers | 13,240 |
| Community Service Workers | 20 |
| Engineering and Construction Crews | |
| Resource Management Crews | |
| Other: _____ | |
| TOTAL | 13,260 |

Total Labor Compensation Expense

| Labor Type | Labor Expense |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Full Time Equivalent Employees | \$1,117,032 |
| Part Time Employees | \$240,260 |
| TOTAL Annual Labor Expense | \$1,357,292 |

Additional Future Positions Needed

| Position / Title | Quantity | FTE or PT | Year Needed | Justification |
|--------------------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Park Ranger 2 | 2 | FT | 2024 | Assist w/additional duties on state |
| Operations Lead | 2 | FT | 2025 | Expand shooting range |
| Operations Worker | 1 | PT | 2024 | Develop and expand equestrian and |
| Housekeeper | 1 | FT | 2025 | Adjust responsibilities between |
| Operations Manager | 1 | FT | 2025 | Hospitality request |
| TOTAL | 7 | | | |



Financial Performance

Revenue per available unit (**Rev Per Unit**) for the last four years in park facilities is detailed in the table below.

Current Rev Per Unit

| Fiscal Year | Cabin Rev Per Unit | Campgrounds Rev Per Unit | Day Use Rev Per Unit | Group Camp Rev Per Unit |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 2019 | 34.78 | 6.84 | 4.84 | 6.28 |
| 2020 | 44.65 | 7.56 | 4.51 | 5.73 |
| 2021 | 60.96 | 10.46 | 10.48 | 3 |
| 2022 | 54.56 | 9.95 | 11.15 | 10.97 |

Projected Rev Per Unit - Based on current Rev Per Unit trends at the park and any known developments over the next four years.

| Fiscal Year | Cabin Rev Per Unit | Campground Rev Per Unit | Day Use Rev Per Unit | Group Camp Rev Per Unit |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 2023 | 64.57 | 11.45 | 13.17 | 12.62 |
| 2024 | 68.12 | 13.32 | 16.15 | 14.48 |
| 2025 | 70.05 | 14.49 | 18.06 | 16.96 |
| 2026 | 72.03 | 16.43 | 20.44 | 18.60 |

Customer Service

| Platform / Site | Year | Customer Satisfaction Level |
|--------------------|------|-----------------------------|
| Net Promoter Score | FY22 | 47 |
| Google | 2023 | 4.7/5 |
| Facebook | 2023 | 4.3/5 |

Professional Development and Training

The following professional development and training opportunities are being explored and planned for the staff and volunteers at this park:

- State Learning Pyramid
- Master Trail builder
- Wildland Firefighting
- Trade Skills
- Customer service training
- Skilled Maintenance Training
- Routine management training
- Routine and specialized law enforcement training

Summary of Key Recommendations

Please provide short-term, mid-term, and long-term recommendations for addressing operational issues at the park and improving overall park performance.

Short Term Recommendations (Less than 1 year)

1. **Site and Facilities**
 - a. Renovate Museum
 - b. Finish Cub Lake Trail repairs
2. **Operations and Staffing**
 - a. Expand gift shop operation
 - b. Extend boat dock hours and offerings
3. **Customer Service / Visitor Experience**
 - a. Add/Improve Cub Lake and campground recreational opportunities
 - b. Expand interpretive offerings

Mid Term Recommendations (2–5 years)

1. **Site and Facilities**
 - a. Repair Equestrian Trails
 - b. Repair Red Leaves and Pin Oak hiking trails
 - c. Repair shooting range
 - d. Add Wi-Fi to the campgrounds
2. **Operations and Staffing**
 - a. Expand boat rental and add a self-service element
 - b. Add fees for shooting range
3. **Customer Service / Visitor Experience**
 - a. Improve access to facilities and recreational opportunities
 - b. Add wayside interpretive markers

Long Term Recommendations (5+ years)

1. **Site and Facilities**
 - a. Connector trail from Pin Oak area to rest of the trail system
 - b. Address siltation in the lakes
2. **Operations and Staffing**
 - a. Shooting sports expansion
3. **Customer Service / Visitor Experience**
 - a. Develop a Senior Ranger Camp



Resource Management Plan

A resource management plan is a specific statement of the objectives you have for your land and natural resources, as well as any significant cultural and historic resources stewarded by the state park. This includes a defined series of priorities and activities that will take place in order to meet those objectives. This can include future potential land acquisitions or divestitures that are necessary to meet the park's resource management goals and objectives.

The goals of Natchez Trace State Park include the protection of our unique natural and cultural resources. These resources include our ties to early American exploration and the Natchez Trace, lifestyles of those who inhabited the land before it became a park, our park history, and the geologic and biologic resources found on the property. The park aims to protect, propagate and/or restore these resources through management and recreation while giving park visitors access to the lands for educational and recreational activities.

The contents of this resource management plan are as follows:

1. Resource Management Objectives
2. Resource Inventory and Assessment
3. Management Strategies
4. Priority Actions
5. Supplemental Information

Resource Management Objectives

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be nationally recognized for exemplary stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

Objective - More and better stewards: Increase internal and external stewards who share Tennessee State Parks core values and can contribute to the State Parks mission to steward Tennessee's natural and cultural resources.

Objective - Better resource management practices: Identify, manage, and restore unique natural and cultural resources for generations to come.

Objective: Better data and technology: Leverage data and technology to help inform and guide decisions on natural and cultural resources stewardship.

Aligned with these objectives are specific strategies to achieve the desired outcomes for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of this park.

Strategies

- A. Natchez Lands Group: Work with our partners in the Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry and Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency to leverage our assets and knowledge to best protect and manage the entire property as a unit.
- B. Work on our public image in an effort to gain more local and community support to participate as donors, volunteer labor and stewards of the resources.
- C. Address siltation issues occurring in park managed lakes and streams.
- D. Work with TVA to stabilize shorelines along Pin Oak Lake.
- E. Expand the park's cultural collection of stories and artifacts as well as increase exhibits and public education regarding our history.

- F. Preserve examples of old home and business sites in the area as well as early park structures.
- G. Interpret the historic significance of the trail that gives the park its name.
- H. Build GIS layers to document resource management needs and tasks.
- I. Better use technology-based resources to educate visitors on site and online of our significance as well as how they can play a role in the park's protection.
- J. Invasive plant control

Resource Inventory and Assessment

The significant natural, cultural and historic resources of the park requiring management are detailed below including a condition assessment rating for each. Condition assessments are selected from the following options based on what most describes the current condition of the resource:

1. **Excellent** – resource is in excellent condition; all potential threats to the integrity of the resource are currently managed and effectively mitigated.
2. **Good** – resource is generally in good condition and stable; threats to the integrity of the resource require regular management in order to mitigate.
3. **Fair** – resource is in stable condition but difficult to mitigate ongoing threats; additional management support is required.
4. **Poor** – resource is generally in poor condition with management support required to both improve existing conditions and address threats.
5. **Critical** – resource is highly threatened or deteriorated and requires immediate management prioritization.

| Significant Park Resources | Quantity | Current Conditions | Notes |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| Forests (State Parklands) | About 7,000 acres | Fair | Little management is done on forests managed by the park with the exception of hazardous trees that endanger visitors or structures and some infestation areas. |
| Creeks | Morris Creek Derryberry Branch Dabbs Creek Cub Creek Brown's Creek | Poor Good Good Good Excellent | Labeled by TDEC as a non-supporting stream and habitat impairment due to siltation TDEC lists as high quality stream TDEC lists as a supporting stream TDEC lists as fully supporting Very little disturbance outside of the lakes |



| | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------|--|
| Lakes | Cub Creek Lake: 53 acres | Good | Some siltation issues. Needs some fisheries management |
| | Pin Oak Lake: 690 acres | Good | Shoreline issues. Needs fisheries management |
| Wetland/Poor Draining Bottomland | About 4,000 acres | Fair | |
| Flora/Fauna Species | | fair | Invasive species need to be controlled. Need biologic inventory |
| Historic Westward Spur of the Natchez Trace | | Poor | Route needs to be marked and interpreted |
| Historic home and business sites | | Poor | Sites need better documentation and interpretation |
| Historic park structures | | Fair | Some renovations are needed |
| WPA/CCC era construction | | Fair | Some items and structures are not under park control and need preservation |

Management Strategies

The management strategies outlined below are directly correlated to the resources identified previously in the *Resource Inventory and Assessment* section immediately above. These are general and overall management recommendations for each resource from which priority actions will be determined. Each resource has both a “Public Use” management strategy (which could include limited or no public access, or managed access with infrastructure and regulation) and a “General Management” strategy.

The priority assignments reflect the highest resource management priorities of the park over the next 1-5 years (High Priority) and 6-10 years (Moderate Priority)

| Resource | Management Recommendations | Priority |
|----------|---|----------|
| Forests | <p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation. Access limited to walking and equine trails. Back country campsites are regulated.</p> <p>General Management: Consultation with the Division of Forestry is needed to identify areas of concern and develop a strategy to promote healthy, diverse and sustaining forest lands.</p> | Moderate |

| | | |
|---|--|----------|
| Creeks | <p>Public Use: Public use and access should be regulated and limited to trail crossings and areas within developed zones of the park.</p> <p>General Management: Watersheds should be managed to control runoff and siltation. The Park's Division needs to work in conjunction with subject experts in the Environmental Division to establish benchmarks and goals for the creeks.</p> | Moderate |
| Lakes | <p>Public Use: Managed access and use in conjunction with TWRA. Access points and usage types should be controlled.</p> <p>General Management: Bank stabilization and siltation should be mitigated. Park should work with TWRA for species management within the lakes. Education and interpretation will help in maintaining healthy lakes and stable ecosystems.</p> | High |
| Wetland/Poor Draining Bottomland | <p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation. Access limited to walking and equine trails. Public access in and through should be minimal other than observational areas.</p> <p>General Management: Work with partners in Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Areas to identify issues and protect sensitive areas. Trails and adjacent lands should be carefully monitored and maintained to protect wetland species.</p> | High |
| Flora/Fauna Species | <p>Public Use: Managed access through trail systems, propagated education areas and permits.</p> <p>General Management: Attention should be given to invasive species control. Educational areas should be constructed in developed zones to give easy access to a variety of flora species. Park should work with TWRA to assist with goals fauna goals.</p> | High |
| Historic Westward Spur of the Natchez Trace | <p>Public Use: Limited to marked zones.</p> <p>General Management: Original trail sections need identification. Interpretive signage needs to be made.</p> | High |
| Historical Park Structures | <p>Public Use: Varies depending on use type of the structure.</p> <p>General Management: Care should be taken to retain some as much of the historic integrity while still allowing for use.</p> | High |
| Historic Home and Business Sites | <p>Public Use: Access should be extremely limited to limited interpretive tours.</p> <p>General Management: Identify and limit access to protect the integrity of the site.</p> | High |



| | | |
|--------------------------|---|------|
| WPA/CCC Era Construction | Public Use: Some areas such as terraces and levees should have limited access to retain the integrity. Some structures may not be safe for public use at the current time. General Management: Lobby for and assist with preservation of relevant structures not currently managed by park | High |
|--------------------------|---|------|

Land Management Strategies

In some cases, strategic land acquisitions or divestitures are necessary to meet the overall resource management goals and objectives of the park. This can include opportunities to address buffers, watersheds, viewsheds, inholdings, and adjacent properties. The table below details **general strategies** for land management. Timelines refer to Short Term (1-3 years), Mid Term (4-6 years), and Long Term (7-10 years).

| Land Management Strategy | Timeline |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Boundary Protection | Short Term |
| Land acquisition from TVA | Long Term |

Supplemental Information

Park property still has some areas that we have not done thorough boundary checks on. The park should explore the possibility of acquiring land currently leased by TVA in an effort to ensure that park goals can be carried out on the property without conflict.

Interpretive Programming and Education Plan

The Interpretation, Programming, and Education planning is currently going through a planning process to further build out the process. This section only represents the very basic framework. As TSP moves forward with the future of Interpretive programming and education this section will likely be changed to accommodate those modifications.

Attached to this plan are the Interpretive Program Templates in fillable PDF forms.

Experiencing the lands of Natchez Trace requires walking with the families who lived off the land and discovering how their lives impacted the environment.

The Natchez Trace State Park interpretive program exists to provide visitors with a resource for natural interpretive programming while embracing the roots of our heritage. As park visitors should have the opportunity to learn and discover about the impact of early inhabitants and builders as well as discover their lifestyles. While doing so they will learn to understand, appreciate and enjoy the park's natural and cultural features. Additionally, as visitors experience the vast amount of land and water resources at Natchez Trace State Park and the adjoining forest our goal is to awaken their natural desires to develop outdoor skills and their appreciation for nature as their senses take in both the natural and recreational resources available.

Interpretation, Programming and Education Goals

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be the most accessible, welcoming, and inviting system of parks that enriches Tennesseans and visitors through excellent interpretation, education, and resource-based recreation.

Objective: *accessible, welcoming, and inviting to all:* create quality and varied programs of interpretation, recreation, and outreach so that all audiences feel welcome and invited.

Objective: *high quality programming:* develop and support mission-based and resource-relevant programs to engage visitors, empower staff, and develop community wellbeing.

Objective: *resource-based outdoor recreation:* provide resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities that ensure representation of Tennessee's natural, scenic, and cultural resources.

Park Interpretation and Programs should be developed with the following desired outcomes:

- Building stewards
- Ensuring Equity
- Providing the Highest Value
- Developing Resource Based Programming
- Supporting Staff

Strategic Programs and Services

The strategies detailed below with corresponding action plans are aligned with the Comprehensive Strategic Plan of Tennessee State Parks.



Strategy – Telling Full Stories: to identify and replicate best practices while establishing new methods for representing diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just dialogues.

Action Plan: The Telling Full Stories best practice techniques will be used as our interpretive staff plan and present programs. Efforts will be made to include programs and activities suited to visitors of all abilities.

Strategy – Interpretative Media: Connecting people to the resources of Tennessee State Parks with technology in ways that compliment and expand interpretation within and beyond the park, giving everyone access to becoming a park steward.

Action Plan: As Natchez Trace expands its interpretive footprint multimedia resources will be used for presentations where feasible. Intentional efforts will be made by interpretive staff to build an online library of virtual programs as well as taking advantage of streaming platforms to conduct programs with those who are unable to physically access park resources.

Strategy – Develop and maintain a portfolio of programs across multiple types of experiences:

- A. Interpretation of natural, historic, and cultural resources
- B. 3-5 unique experiences for all audiences
- C. Varying intensity from self-guided to immersive experiences
- D. Partnership opportunities for program delivery
- E. Varying costs to the user from “free to fee” based on the benefit to the participant, value to the park, and impact to the resource.

Action Plan: Utilize SharePoint and prioritize creating program plans and outlines through IPPs

Strategy – Develop and maintain diverse and varied resourced-based outdoor recreation opportunities across multiple types of experiences:

- A. Managing recreational use with the stewardship needs of the resource
- B. Varying intensity from self-guided to guided experiences
- C. Partnership opportunities for program delivery
- D. Varying costs to the user from “free to fee” based on the benefit to the participant, value to the park, and impact to the resource.

Action Plan: Work with partners in the Natchez Lands Group to develop a variety of outdoor experiences across diverse demographics.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS:

- Nonpersonal Interpretation: Interpretive media that do not require a person to deliver a message (i.e. exhibits, waysides, brochures, signs, magazines, books, etc.).
- Personal Interpretation: One person or persons providing interpretation to another person or persons.
- Interpretive Program: Activities, presentations, publications, audio-visual media, signs, and exhibits that convey key heritage resource messages to audiences. (Adapted from US Fish & Wildlife Service)
- Interpretation: a purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us.

Financial Performance Goals

Financial performance goals are a critical performance management tool of the Tennessee State Park System. While the financial performance of parks are managed more intently at the system level, individual parks are expected to recover a portion of their operating costs through the generation of earned revenues where appropriate and to contribute to the system goals. The majority of earned revenues at state parks are generated through facility usage (campsites, cabins, lodge rooms, rentable pavilions, etc.), the delivery of fee-based programs and services, equipment rental and usage, and retail sales. Other forms of revenue generation come from golf courses and restaurants where those amenities are present. That said, not all parks have the same ability to generate earned revenues because the availability of facilities or programs vary widely from one park to the next. The “recovery” of operational costs by earned revenues is referred to as “cost recovery”. Operating costs beyond those supported by earned revenues represents the extent to which state funding support operations at each park.

The table below represents the overall park cost recovery for this specific park for the most recent fiscal year and forecast estimates for the upcoming five years. These estimates are based on projection estimates for known and foreseeable costs and recovery figures.

| FINANICAL PERFORMANCE GOALS | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Current Cost Recovery (2022) | Target Cost Recovery: FY 2023 | Target Cost Recovery: FY 2024 | Target Cost Recovery: FY: 2025 | Target Cost Recovery: FY 2026 | Target Cost Recovery: FY 2027 |
| Park Overall | 63% | 72.6% | 89.6% | 90.3% | 91.2% | 92.1% |

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